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# British Association Meeting.

## NOTTINGHAM, 1866.

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## ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND STATISTICS.

PROFESSOR ROGERS, PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

DR. DAUBENY communicated a statement of the number of degrees of Bachelor in Arts conferred by the University of Oxford each year from the middle of the seventeenth century down to the present time, from which it would appear that the increase in that respect which has taken place is by no means proportionate to the progress of the country, in population, wealth, and intelligence.

Amongst the causes which have led to this result, he would suggest as one, the circumstance that an University education, instead of being regarded, as is the case in other countries, the fitting preparation for all the liberal professions, has by us been chiefly confined either to youths educated for the Church, or to those not intended for any profession at all.

Confining himself to the Medical Profession, he had ascertained, that the number of Graduates had sunk in Oxford from about four annually to every five millions of the population, which was the case two centuries ago, to less than one at the present time.

The reasons assigned for medical students so rarely resorting for their education to the University, may be briefly stated as follows:—

1. The prevailing notion, that neither professional knowledge, nor even the sciences regarded as preparatory to it, can be acquired so well there as elsewhere.

2. The large outlay which a University education is supposed to entail.

3. The necessity imposed upon the student of devoting the greater part of his time during his residence to the dead languages, thus throwing back pursuits of a more professional character to a later period of life than that at which they are commenced elsewhere.

4. The danger of acquiring habits and tastes incompatible with the successful career of a medical man, from daily intercourse with a class of youths intended for different walks in life.

Now the first of these obstacles has been removed, so far as relates to the preliminary studies, by the recent establishment in Oxford of a staff of Professors as efficient, and of means and appliances for the prosecution of Chemistry, Anatomy, and the like, as ample, as are to be found in any other rival institution, whilst with regard to studies purely professional, it is conceived that they can be best acquired after the preliminary ones are fully mastered, and may therefore be reserved with advantage till the time when the necessary residence in the University has been completed.

Secondly, that the large sum supposed to be required for an Oxford education, arises, not from the charges of board, lodging and tuition, which every student must incur, but from the expensive habits and costly amusements in which so many indulge. The latter, therefore, might be avoided by any body of youths, who were sufficiently considerable in point of numbers to associate chiefly amongst themselves, and who were placed where they would not be in constant communication with students of ampler means and different pursuits.

Thirdly, the objection raised from the undue postponement of their studies has been already in part removed by the new regulation, which enables the Undergraduate to terminate his classical reading after two years of residence at the University.

Fourthly, in reply to those who apprehend that habits unfitting for a medical man are likely to be acquired by a residence at the University, it was suggested, that the risk of this would be much lessened by establishing a Hall or College which should be resorted to principally by medical students, who would thus form a community of their own, and feel less temptation to join in the pursuits of the wealthier and idler portion of Oxford society.

It is not, however, suggested that Oxford should be substituted for London as a place for acquiring clinical instruction. All that is maintained is, that the preparatory studies, such as Chemistry and Anatomy, may be mastered as well out of London as in it, and that it can never be advisable that the acquisition of so large a part of that knowledge, which is looked for from an aspirant to a Medical Degree should be compressed within the short compass of the time he is expected to reside in the Metropolis, whilst all the previous years of his life, since the period of his leaving school, have been engrossed by an apprenticeship to an apothecary, with few opportunities of learning anything beyond the art of compounding medicines.

Would it not, it was asked, be more advantageous to a large proportion at least of these students, if, before they were considered old enough to reside in London, exempt from all moral supervision, they were to spend half the year in keeping terms at the University, and in there obtaining a sound knowledge of those sciences which constitute the basis of a medical education? And would it not be found sufficient for them to devote merely the remaining half to the routine of an apothecary's shop, for the purpose of acquiring whatever knowledge can be derived from such a quarter?

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Dr Daubeny
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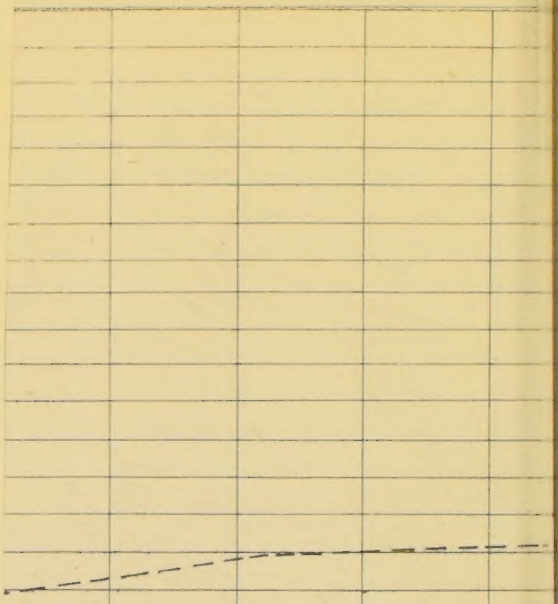

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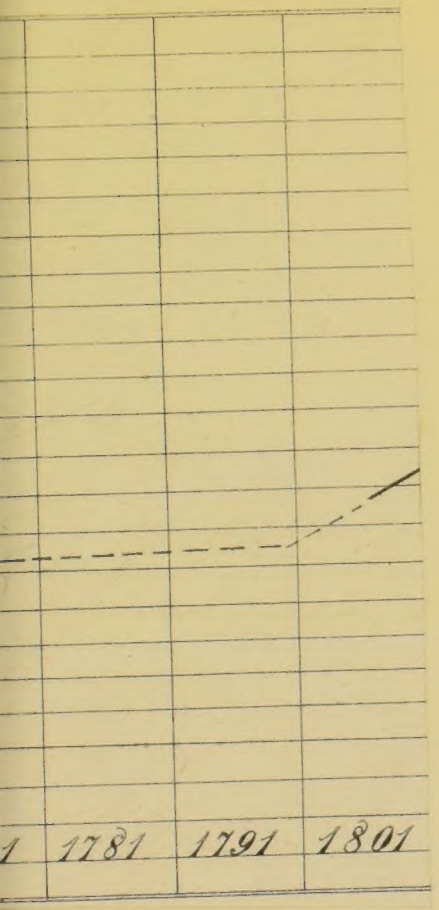

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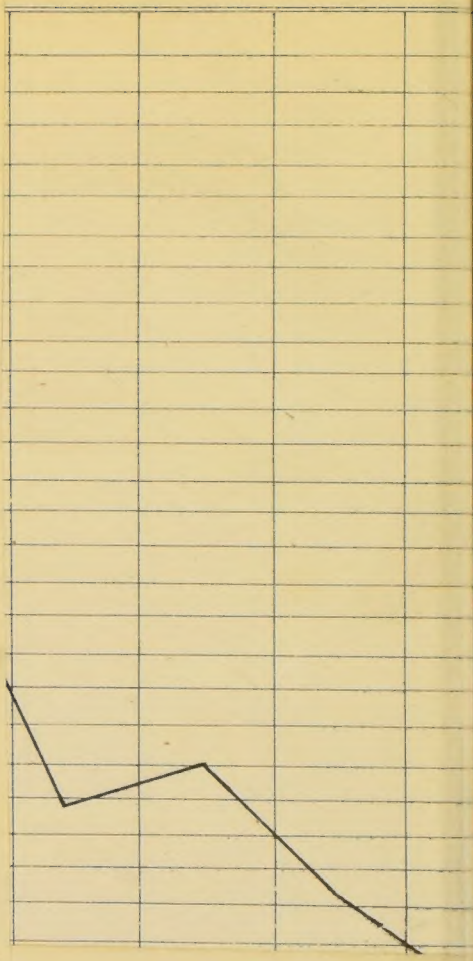
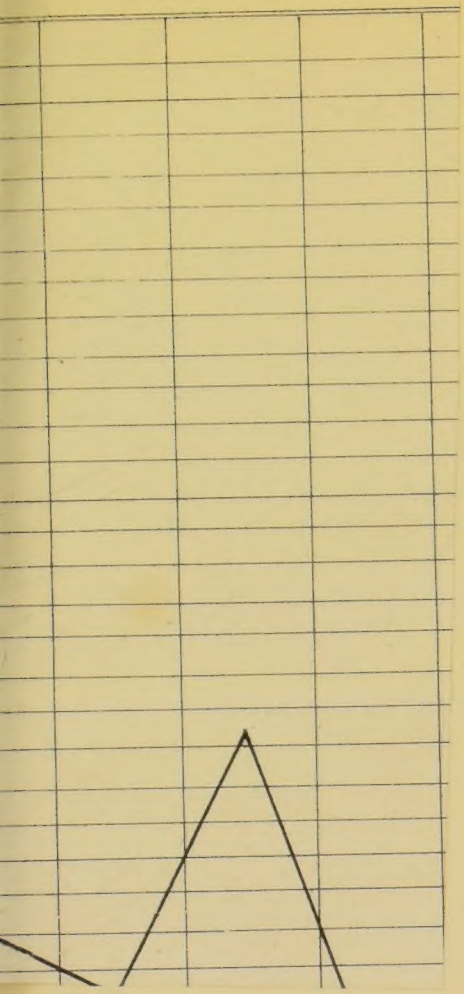
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